

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7324

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SP

SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF LT. GENERAL GUTIERREZ MELLADO AS
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT

1. DURING RECEPTION AT THE PALACE EVENING SEPTEMBER 23, I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH A NUMBER OF MINISTERS AND MILITARY MEN REGARDING THE APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL GUTIERREZ MELLADO. SECOND VICE PRESIDENT OSORIO MADE A POINT OF RAISING THE SUBJECT WITH ME AND EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION THAT THIS APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN MADE, SINCE IT WOULD CONTRIBUTE IMPORTANTLY TO THE EXECUTION OF THE REFORM PROGRAM. HE ALSO REFERRED TO IT AS "AN IMPORTANT GIFT TO YOU", THIS PRESUMABLY BEING REFERENCE TO THE CLOSE RELATIONS THAT WE HAVE HAD WITH GUTIERREZ MELLADO OVER THE YEARS. OSORIO SAID THAT THIS APPOINTMENT HAD LONG BEEN PLANNED AND HE DENIED THAT THE DEPARTURE OF SANTIAGO WAS AS A RESULT OF ANY ONE PARTICULAR INCIDENT. RATHER, IT WAS THE CULMINATION OF A PROCESS IN WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER WANTED TO GET A GENERAL INTO THAT POSITION WHO WAS MORE IN TUNE WITH THE POLITICAL REFORM PROCESS.

2. CAPTAIN GENERAL OF THE MADRID REGION, LT. GENERAL VEGA, WHO ALSO HAS A REPUTATION AS A LIBERAL, WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE APPOINTMENT AND ALSO
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DENIED THERE HAD BEEN ANY PARTICULAR INCIDENT LEADING

TO SANTIAGO'S DEPARTURE. (IN FACT, WE BELIEVE THAT SANTIAGO DID INDICATE TO SUAREZ HIS UNHAPPINESS OVER THE REFORM PROGRAM AND PLACED HIS RESIGNATION AT THE DISPOSAL OF SUAREZ, WHO WASTED NO TIME IN ACCEPTING IT.) HE SAID THAT IN FACT, HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED THAT SANTIAGO HAD BEEN WILLING IN THE FIRST PLACE TO ACCEPT THE APPOINTMENT AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT SINCE SANTIAGO HAD REALLY NOT BEEN CUT OUT FOR ANY POLITICAL ROLE. VEGA ALSO COMMENTED THAT WHEN ALL THE LT. GENERALS HAD MET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER PRIOR TO THE RELEASE OF THE POLITICAL REFORM PROGRAM, THEY HAD BASICALLY GONE TO LISTEN AND THERE HAD BEEN NO INTENTION OF HAVING A DEBATE.

3. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC NEGATIVE REACTION FROM WITHIN THE MILITARY TO THE APPOINTMENT OF THIS RELATIVELY JUNIOR LT. GEN. TO THE SECOND RANKING PLACE IN THE GOVERNMENT. BALANCING THE PRIVATE GRUMBLING WE HAVE HEARD FROM SOME SENIOR MILITARY CONTACTS IS PROBABLY A CONSIDERABLE STOREHOUSE OF GOOD WILL TOWARD GUTIERREZ FROM MORE JUNIOR OFFICERS. WHEN I CAME UP TO CONGRATULATE GUTIERREZ MELLADO AT THE PALACE RECEPTION, HE WAS WITH THE MINISTER OF THE NAVY AND MINISTER OF THE AIR, AND BOTH ECHOED THE CONGRATULATIONS WHICH I HAD EXTENDED. (WE HAVE ALSO HEARD REPORTS THAT NAVY MINISTER PITA DA VEIGA HAD HOPED THAT HE MIGHT EVENTUALLY BE GIVEN THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENCY AND THAT HE MAY HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED AT THE OUTSET WITH GUTIERREZ MELLADO'S APPOINTMENT. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS DISAPPOINTMENT WILL AMOUNT TO MORE THAN THAT.)
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